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International Court of Justice

H0996 - 0002

COM B.
TAKE 3. P.1.
OVERINGTON
27 JUNE 1946
1400 - 1530
BIEDERMANN

OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT OF TESTIMONY FOR THE DEFENSE OF ORGANIZATIONS, TAKEN BEFORE A COMMISSION APPOINTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL PURSUANT TO PARAGRAPH 4 OF THE ORDER OF THE TRIBUNAL DATED 13 MARCH 1946.

COMMISSIONER:

Mr. George R. Taylor.

POLITICAL LEADERS

(The Commission convened at 1430 hours.)

BRUNO BIEDERMANN, a witness, took the stand and testified as follows:

BY THE COMMISSIONER:

Q. Will the witness state his name.

A. Bruno Biedermann.

Q. Will the witness raise his right hand and repeat this oath after me:

I swear by God, the Almighty and Omniscient, that I will speak the pure truth and will withhold and add nothing.

(The witness repeated the oath.)

BY THE COMMISSIONER: You may sit down.

DIRECT EXAMINATION

DR. BERGUS (Counsel for the Political Leaders): I shall hear the witness as stated in the written document on the organization and the duties of the Corps of Political Leaders in Thuringia and the specific charges; persecution of Jews, persecution of the church, treatment of foreign labor and the question of lynching of enemy aviators who had to perform emergency landings. At first, personal questions.

Q. What is your age?

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A. 41.

Q. What is your profession?

A. I am in the iron business.

Q. Would you give me a very short description of your personal history?

A. I was the ninth child of a farmer in Erzgebirge. After having been a pupil in the village school for eight years I entered a three year commercial school. I was commercial teacher for three years. Up to 1933 I had jobs in my line. I was the manager with the right to sign, of an iron business.

Q. When did you join the Party?

A. I joined the Party in 1925 and until 1933 I performed the honary function of a kassenleiter which is a treasurer. I was treasurer of the local group. Automatically the local group then became a Kreis. At the end of 1933, I was active for a short period with the Landesbauernschaft, that is the land farmer group of Thuringia. At the request of the Gauleiter of Thuringia I became a full time paid employee of the Party. Until 1936, I was Gaugeschaftsfuhrer that is Gau business manager. From 1936 on I took over the office of the newly constructed personnel section of the Gau. During my activity as Gaupersonalamtsleiter, which is the manager of the personnal section of the Gau, I temporarily also fulfilled the functions of Gauinspekteur. The task of the Gau personnel office during the war was considerably reduced. For this reason I also had to take over the leadership of the Gaustabsdmt. Without my knowledge and without any action on my part I was made honorary leader in the S.A. My last rank was that of Oberfuhrer.

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COM B.
TAKE 3. P.3.
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Q. I am beginning with the question relating to the organization book. The Indictment charges that the organization book is the official organization book of the NSDAP. That probably means that the Indictment assumes that the organization book has the value of official field regulations. What would be the difference between an official field order instructions book and the organization book of the NSDAP?

A. I know both the field regulations of the Wehrmacht and the organization book of the Party. While all trainers and officers within the Army had strictly to observe the regulations of the Army field instructions, the organization book of the Party could not be considered as directives comparable on the same level to the Party Political Leaders.

Q. Do you know of any case in which a Political Leader gave his report in accordance with the organization book of the Party?

A. Neither myself nor my co-workers nor the other Political Leaders of the Gau, as far as I know them, used the organization book in their work.

Q. Did the organization book contain secret orders or instructions?

A. The organization book did not contain secret orders or information of any kind.

Q. If that is so, could you explain to me why the book has been characterized as to be used only for official service groups?

A. Not only the organization book but many other publications of the Party which were just as widely read as this book contain secrets which did not exist in the party book at all. Many of them characterized for official use only.

Q. How do you explain the large number of copies published?

A. I do not know how large the total number of copies published was,

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but I do know that the Gau treasurer compiled the figure of copies to be distributed to the Gau and ordered accordingly.

Q. Could you make some rough estimate as to what extent the book was actually read within the Party?

A. Because the book contained a large number of pictures and also colored pictures, of course, many political leaders looked at it, but I believe that there was not one political leader within the Gau of Thuringia who actually studied and read through the whole book.

Q. What do you know about the personal attitude of Adolph Hitler with regard to the instructions contained in that book?

A. I do not know the personal attitutde of Adolph Hitler. I myself, however, considered the organization book merely theoretical speculation which was in many respects not in accordance with the actual realities and practice and that it contained in many respects wishful thinking for the future state of affairs to be reached.

Q. Details of the Indictment make it necessary that we compare some practical details with the regulations contained in the book. The organization book in its 1936 issue deals with the concept of Hoheitstrager in a manner different from that way in which the terms had been used in previous orders. Can you inform us on the concept of Hoheitstrager as it was understood in practice?

A. For us in the Party there existed always only three Hoheitstrager not including the Fuehrer himself and these three were the Gau, Kreis and Ortsgruppenleiter.

Q. Does that definition of Hoheitstrager make use of the concept of

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total responsibility used within the Party? In regard to the Hoheitstraeger you agree with me that the idea of total responsibility was determined?

A. Yes.

Q. And if I understand correctly what you just say then I may say that you believe that Block and Zellenleiters were not included in that total responsibility?

A. No, it was not included.

Q. Do you know that the term "Hoheitstraeger" had created difficulties even within the Supreme Leadership of the Party?

A. Yes. There was a plan to include the Reichsleiters too into the Hoheitstraeger but they too lacked the characteristics of Hoheitstraeger and therefore were not included.

Q. If, therefore, after 1936, the Block and Zellenleiters too were called Hoheitstraeger you would say that it was merely a formal term?

A. Yes.

Q. I believe that I can summarize a number of the questions I had planned to ask. They refer to certain orders issued in regard to Hoheitstraeger, but which were not valid for the Block and Zellenleiters, for instance, the necessity to apply for special permission if a civil servant should be transferred if he was a Hoheitstraeger, or the necessity to obtain a special permit whenever a Hoheitstraeger, was requested to make statements as a witness before a court. Can you testify, witness, that Block and Zellenleiters did not have to comply with those orders covering Hoheitstraeger?

A. In my office I had particularly to deal with those matters and such a permit had to be obtained only in the cases of Hoheitstraeger who were Ortsgruppenleiters. In the case of Block and Zellenleiters that was not necessary.

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The permission to be witness before a court had to be obtained not only by Hoheitstraeger but by all Political Leaders from the Gauleiters but that permission was granted in all cases.

Q. I would like to direct your attention to another point of importance. I have before me the fourth edition of the organization book. The book has been used as PS-93. There on page 23 a sharp distinction is made between call to office and appointment to office. The German words are "berufung" and "eruennung". There is stated that the so-called office berufung is pronounced in regard to the office as such and that the appointment of office (eruennung) covers the rank of the office holder. There seems to be distinctions similar to that made within the army in regard to office and rank of office holder. Can you, on the basis of your practical experience enlighten me in regard to those distinctions and can you correct me perhaps if they did not exist?

COMMISSIONER: We will now recess for ten minutes.

(The Commission reconvened at 1520)

Q. I will summarize my last question. In was concerned with the distinctions between rank of office and actual position of office. The organization book said that to an actual office you were actually called to and that for the special ~~ix~~ rank you were holding it was necessary to receive a special appointment. Was it necessary within the customary language used by the Party to be called to a certain office and to be appointed to a certain rank?

A. Usually the Party member was appointed to office at first for probabation time of six months and afterwards the office was officially turned over to him. If he had performed satisfactorily within those six months he was

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officially appointed to the office and received the necessary rank.

Q. So one became Political Leader by appointment and by appointment only?

A. Yes.

Q. Does the carrying out of the functions of a Political Leader depend on a certain function?

A. No, he had to be appointed to be a Political Leader. That was the first condition.

Q. Therefore the organization book reflects correctly the conditions when it says for instance a member of the Party may be called by a Gauleiter into the office of Director of the Gau, press office or something like that. That does not necessarily mean that he receives a certain rank?

A. This is a true picture of the realities.

Q. It therefore happened that somebody actually filled an office for a longer period of time without having been a Political Leader?

A. Yes.

Q. Wasn't that the true picture particularly for the lower ranks during the years of the war?

A. It is true for all war office holders unless they were holding office already before the war.

Q. I must come back to my question in regard to the Block and Zellenleiters. Since they were the lower layer of office holders one can assume that they had been office holders prior to the war.

A. In general your assumption is quite correct. There were a few exceptions. For instance a few cases where a person who was holding a higher office came from another locality and was appointed Block and Zellenleiter , but the number of those cases was very small perhaps 2% of the total number. But to

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give a complete picture those cases had to be mentioned.

Q. Since that matter is of high significance I would like to clarify it completely. Block and Zellenleiters became political leaders only if and when they were appointed to those offices expressly even if they had filled that function previously to that appointment already.

A. They would become Political Leaders only at that moment when the Kreisleiter who was the Hoheitstraeger competent for such appointments, pronounced their appointment.

Q. Do you know of cases in which women or candidates for Party membership were entrusted with a temporary taking care of the function of the Block and Zellenleiters for some period of time sometimes for longer periods of time without having been appointed to be a Political Leader?

A. During the last years of the war we were compelled to make much use of women or candidates for Party membership because other party members were not available any longer because they had been called to army service.

Q. If the Indictment uses the term Political Leader in the terminology of the Nazi Party all those who were holding office without having been expressly appointed to be a Political Leader all those would have to be excluded?

A. Yes.

Q. One cannot speak of any uncertainty of the Nazi terminology in that regard?

A. No.

Q. There are still a few questions left in regard to the staff office on the Kreis and Gau level. The Gau and the Kreisleiters as Political officers were concerned with the political, phylosophic guidance of men. Were there offices which were connected with that political guidance of men in a narrow sense and in a broader sense and which office would you consider to have been connected

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definitely with that political guidance of men?

A. All tasks of ~~the~~ the Party, of course, were of a political nature. The offices on the Gau and Kreis level were divided ~~into~~ into so-called ~~Hauptamt~~ Hauptamt, main office and Amter offices, that is merely office. The Hauptamt, the main offices, were divided among those whom the Hoheitstraeger needed most for the fulfillment of his political tasks and those office holders who fulfilled mainly professional, expert assignments. Those offices of a mainly political nature in the staff of the Hoheitstraeger were those concerned with propaganda, press and training and all of those with a more administrative task, which were staff organization, personnel and treasurer. In accordance with the structure of the individual office, the Gauleiter had an inner circle of people with whom he worked closely together, and in the case of our Gau that inner circle was composed of men concerned with propaganda, press and training, the man in charge of staff affairs, the representative of the German Labor Front, the Farmers' representative, the National Socialist Welfare ~~Kreis~~ Federation representative, and the representative of the women. All these belonged to the most inner circle of Gauleiter.

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Q. For the political work, in the most narrow sense of the word, you mentioned only three offices--propaganda, press, and training.

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know that the Organization Book characterizes also the staff office, the organizations office, and the personnel office as belonging to that level?

A. Yes, I know, but those three last-mentioned offices had mainly administrative tasks, while the first three had the political task of addressing the people and spreading the gospel to them.

Q. With reference to the associated organizations--they were merely professional organizations?

A. Associated organizations would be the merely professional organizations of the educators, the men of leading professions, the physicians, the academic teachers, the students, and the civil servants. Teachers and students were a different category, the leaders of whom could be appointed by political leaders.

Q. But in the case of those whom we have just mentioned, it is true to state that they were political leaders only when they had been expressly appointed to be such. Is that true?

A. Yes.

Q. The conferences of the political leaders are considered by the Prosecution as proof of participation in conspiracy. In what kind of periodical conferences did you, as a political leader, participate?

A. If not prevented, I participated in all conferences of gau and kreis officeholders in Thuringia.

Q. Were those conferences secret, or was the number or kind of participants limited in any way?

A. Those conferences were never secret, but of course the number of participants

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was limited ~~by~~ to the groups I just characterized.

If the office holders were prevented from participating, of course their deputies were permitted to attend for them. In addition to those officeholders, in many cases the lord mayor and the provincial state officials were asked to attend. That was the case whenever the gauleiter addressed the assembly in his capacity as ~~Reich~~ Reichsstatthalter for Thuringia or as a subordinate in Reich matters for the Gau.

Q. What the subject of conversations at these conferences?

A. The gau officeholders reported about their fields of activity, and the kreisleiter gave brief reports to them. At the end, the gauleiter himself gave a political survey.

Q. Were any matters touched upon which in any way had a connection with, or supported, crimes against the peace and crimes against humanity?

A. I participated in practically all such conferences in Thuringia within the last twelve years. Never was there any discussion about aggressive war, crimes of any other kind, outrages, or any related matters.

MR. TAYLOR: May I ask Counsel how long he will need this witness? The Prosecution will need some time for cross-examination, and we should finish with him at five o'clock.

DR. BERGES: I still have a considerable number of questions which will take approximately until 4:30;

MR. TAYLOR: Is the Prosecution able to indicate how long the cross-examination will take?

COLONEL GRIFFITH-JONES: I think not very long.

BY DR. BERGES:

Q. The indictment charges that the Corps of Political Leaders

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participated in a conspiracy, and they support their charge with certain points of the Party Program. It especially makes reference to Points One, Two, and Three of the Party Program: Demands for the union of all Germans, demands for the abrogation of the Treaty of Versailles and St. Germaine, and the demand for colonies. Did you or the Political Leaders think of war and other crimes in conjunction with those points?

A. Referring to Point One: We thought that the union of all Germans should be accomplished on the basis of the self-determination right of all peoples, as it has been recognised, I believe, in the Treaty of Versailles. We never thought of war in that regard. The same holds true in regard to the attainment of colonies and the abrogation of the treaties of Versailles and St. Germaine by peaceful means.

Q. As a further support for its charge of conspiracy, the Prosecution uses quotations from Hitler's "Mein Kampf." Did you know whether political leaders in your district established inevitable connection between those points and war?

A. Myself, and the political leaders I knew then, never thought that we would have another World War.

Q. May I summarize. Did you put belief and trust in Hitler's manifestations and proclamations of peaceful intentions?

A. Yes, under any circumstances.

Q. Did you know the order of Hitler which was posted in all important Party, and other, offices, to the effect that important matters of State or of military nature should be known only to those persons immediately and directly concerned with such matters?

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A. I learned of that order for the first time when I was a soldier. I never thought that that order had anything bearing on the Party, because the Party officers, particularly those from the ortsgruppenleiter down, had nothing to do with any important or secret matters.

MR. TAYLOR: Don't you think the answer to that could have been "Yes" or "No", instead of all that explanation?

DR. BERGES: Yes.

MR. TAYLOR: Unless you want all this in. I will not object to it if you want all that material.

DR. BERGES: That is sufficient.

BY DR. BERGES:

Q. Up to what office did people receive the newspaper, "Der Hoheitstraeger"?

A. Down to the ortsgruppenleiter, which would mean that block and zellen leiters did not receive it.

Q. I would like to discuss with you the relationship of the Political Leaders to the SS. Did any Political Leaders have the right to mobilize the SS?

A. The SS originally was an organization of the Party. No hoheitstraeger and no Political Leader had the right to mobilize any organization of the Party. When the chief of the SS was appointed chief of the German police, the SS gained more and more the function of a State police force. That was true because a large number of members of the SS were transferred to the Waffen SS, the Gestapo, and the SD. Practically, the general SS was not in existence anymore--an observation which we made repeatedly when Party parades were held.

Q. The point I am particularly interested in is the statement of the Organizations Book of the Party claiming that the hoheitstraeger--which would even include, in accordance with the Organizations Book, the block and zellen leiter--had the right to mobilize the SS. Is that statement correct?

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A. When the Party organizations--SS, SA--were participating in Party demonstrations, the only thing which could be done was that the hoheitstraeger asked the leaders of the unit of the SA or the SS to participate.

Q. A few ~~x~~ special questions concerning the district of Thuringia? Your superior officer and gauleiter for many years was Mr. Sauckel?

A. Yes.

Q. How was the relationship of Mr. Sauckel to the SS, especially to the SS leadership?

A. If you are referring by "leadership" to the Reichsfuehrer of the SS, then I can only answer that the relationship was a poor one.

Q. Can you give us a brief example of that?

A. Yes. In 1932 the State Diet of ~~Thuriggia~~ Thuringia appointed Mr. Sauckel to become Minister of the Interior for the State of Thuringia. In that capacity he was the boss of the State Police of Thuriggia. After 1933, Himmler came into office and subordinated all State Police to the Reich. Subsequently, Mr. Sauckel, who later became Reichs Governor for Thuringia, had no influence whatsoever on the State Police of Thuringia. As a rule, the Gestapo made him see merely accomplished facts. That led to controversies with~~in~~ the Reichsfuehrer SS in his capacity as chief of the German Police. That was the reason and the beginning of the controversies between those two men.

Q. That is enough. I have a more specialized question. The SS was in charge of concentration camps?

A. If I am not mistaken, the concentration camps were not under the SS, as such, but rather under the Reichsfuehrer SS in his capacity as chief of the police.

Q. That may be. What I am interested in is whether the Political Leiters had anything to do with the concentration camps.

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A. The Political Leiters had nothing to do whatsoever with the creation, ~~x~~

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with the guarding, or with anything else concerning the concentration camps. That I know from my own experience. In the neighborhood of Weimar, there was the concentration camp of Buchenwald.

Q. Do you know of cases in which people were put into concentration camps upon the order of Political Leiters?

A. No, I know of no such cases; but I do know of many cases in which kreisleiters and gauleiters exerted pressure for the dismissal of people from concentration camps. I would like to describe very briefly one case. In the fall of 1944, in the course of the campaign Gitter, all former representatives and xx councilmen of Marxist parties---Socialists and Communists---were put into the concentration camp Buchenwald. By telephone calls from kreisleiters in Thuringia, I was notified of that campaign. I xxxxxxx repeated the matter to the gauleiter and, through a telegram of most emphatic protest to the Reichsfuehrer SS against that matter, the result was that the majority of that group was released again from Buchenwald.

Q. Would I fairly summarize the situation, on the basis of testimony of earlier witnesses, that the SS lived an isolated life of its own, and was a State within a State?

A. Yes.

Q. I would like to dwell briefly on the persecution of the Jews, which has been used by the Prosecution. I am referring to the district of Thuringia. xxxxxx Do you know of cases in which Political Leiters have participated in the mistreatment of Jews?

A. No, I do not know of any cases like that in the Gau of Thuringia.

Q. Do you know that anti-Semitism was an official point of the Party Program?

A. Yes.

Q. How did you and the other Political Leiters interpret that point of the Party Program?

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A. Myself, and the other Political Leiters, thought that the Jewish problem would be solved in the following manner--that the Jews would be given certain reserve territories to dwell in, in a ~~xxxx~~ similar manner to the Zionist Movement in Palestine.

Q. Your boss was Mr. Sauckel? Did Mr. Sauckel approve any crimes against the Jews?

A. No.

COLONEL KAREV: This question is irrelevant.

DR. BERGES: The question refers, not to the person of Sauckel, but rather to his position as gauleiter. What we want to consider here, in spite of the fact that Sauckel was dealt with by the Tribunal already--we want to consider here what his influence was on the Political Leiters.

MRL TAYLOR: If the witness personally knows of the matter within his gau, it probably would be a proper question; but if he knows nothing about it, then the question is ~~x~~ immaterial.

DR. BERGES: The witness was a co-worker of Sauckel for twelve years.

MR. TAYLOR: Did he answer the question yet? Well, let him answer the question briefly.

A. When the action against the Jews was taken November 9-10 1938, I was with Sauckel in Munich. Only the next day I learned of those outrages. On the way back in the motorcar, Sauckel expressed himself to me on these campaigns, and he resented it very much and characterized it as stupidity of the highest degree.

Q. Did he tell that to you only personally and privately, or did he reiterate it publicly in meetings with gauleiters and kreisleiters?

A. As far as I can remember, he re-emphasized that position in the following conference of gau ~~xx~~ Political Leiters.

Q. I briefly wish to dwell on the charge of the Prosecution concerning the

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persecution of the Church. Did you know of the so-called "religion stop" order by Hitler?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know of any directives ordered or given to lower Party officials which would be in conflict with that order that was destined to establish peace between the Party and the Church?

A. The gauleiter in repeated conferences stressed that kreisleiters and gauleiters definitely had to observe all orders by the Fuehrer.

Q. Notwithstanding that order, did outrages occur directed against ministers or members of religious orders?

A. No, not in Thuringia.

Q. Were religious services or similar church demonstrations disturbed?

A. No.

Q. Were you asked to leave the Church, or did you urge people on whom you had influence to disassociate themselves from the Church?

A. I emerged from the German Wandervogel Movement. I left the Church many years ago. I was never asked by the Party to leave the Church, and I myself never asked any Political Leiter, nor did any of my co-workers ask anyone to leave the Church.

MR. TAYLOR: I think that answers the question.

BY DR. BERGES:

Q. I still would like to touch upon the question of foreign labor. Mr. Sauckel filled the position of plenipotentiary for employment. There existed innumerable orders by Sauckel requesting the humane treatment of the workers?

A. Yes.

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Q. How were those orders carried out in Thuringia?

A. For the carrying out of the employment problem, the gauleiter had appointed a special officials in Thuringia, and he issued orders to him as well as to the State Labor Office to the effect that his orders had to be carried out particularly strictly in his home gau, Thuringia.

Q. Before the High Tribunal, the Prosecution has submitted documents which show that Sauckel directives were not observed--at least, in the district of Essen. That is proven particularly by an affidavit of group physician Dr. Jaeger. Could it have occurred that in Thuringia, in spite of Sauckel's directives, foreign labor could have been treated badly without your knowing it?

A. At least the kreis officials of the German Labor Front, and the other kreis officials, would have learned of those outrages and would have reported them to us immediately. I know of cases in which foreign labor was mistreated--and then those people were simply removed. I remember an incident in which the German supervisors took food from the foreign laborers. They were brought before a court and sentenced to hard labor.

Q. My last point refers to the lynchings of foreign aviators. There exists an article by Mr. Goebbels in that respect, which was published in the "Volkischer Beobachter." Also a circular letter by Borman to the Political Leiters down to the kreisleiters. It can't be denied that the pronouncements of Goebbels and Borman approved, more or less openly, the lynchings. Did the Political Leiters in your district whom you know approve of that attitude or did they resent it?

A. As far as I see, the Political Leiters of Thuringia did not interpret those articles as an order to carry out lynchings. During the time of my activity in Thuringia, I learned of no instances in which Political Leiters shot or mistreated foreign aviators.

Q. What was the attitude of the population of Thuringia to that proposal?

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A. I don't know of any cases in which members of the German population lynched foreign aviators. Of course they were very indignant about the attacking methods of the enemy fliers. Particularly when the low-flying enemy fliers started to take as targets running trains and farmers and farmers' wives working in the fields.

Q. My question was, was the population of Thuringia prepared to commit lynchings, or to consider those fliers as prisoners of war?

A. Of course, the moment the enemy fliers baled out, they were considered prisoners of war and treated accordingly. Even on the estate of a gau officeholder, they were...

COLONEL KAREV: The witness is giving mere assumptions, and is not basing his testimony on personal knowledge. He repeats, "I assume..."

DR. BERGES: I am coming to another question which will not permit further assumptions.

BY DR. BERGES:

Q. Did the Political Leiters do anything to change the attitude of the people, which you described?

A. No, not as far as I know.

DR. BERGES: No further questions.

CROSS-EXAMINATION

BY COLONEL GRIFFITH-JONES:

Q. Do you know that we have had witnesses here from the Corps of Political Leiters from, I think, now, Thuringia, Bavaria, Rhineland, Hannover, and Westphalia?

A. Yes.

Q. And do you know that they have all told us that, in those districts, nobody ever persecuted the Jews, nobody had anything to do with the SD, the Gestapo, or concentration camps, nobody mistreated any of the millions of slave laborers that

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were in Germany, nobody lynched airmen, and nobody did anything to persecute the churches. What I want to ask you is this: Can you tell me whereabouts in Germany any of these things did happen?

A. I am under oath, and what I amtelling you is my experiance in the Gau of Thuringia, as a Political Leiter there. I cannot speak for any others.

Q. Then let us see to what extent your oath is of value. I want to deal with one or two points on the matters you have raised. I will deal first of all with your evidence on foreign labor. Do you know that, on 12 March 1943, the Minister for Enlightenment and Propaganda held a conference on the question of the treatment of slave laborers?

A. I know nothing about it.

Q. Will you can take it,that he did, and that it was laid down there that the treatment of foreign workers was to be better in the future than it had been in the past--in order to increase their production. I just want to read you one or two words from the minutes of that meeting and ask your view on it: "The hitherto prevailing treatment of the Eastern workers has led, not only to a diminished production...etc." --Then it goes on to say, "The treatmentof foreign workers, which until now was markedly different from the treatment of subjects of Western and Eastern countries, will be put on a uniform basis as much as possible. Particularly, the living standards of the Eastern workers will be raised." Now, are you telling us that the treatment of foreign workers had been markedly different from the treatment of subjects of Western and Eastern countries everyplade in Germany,except in Thuringia?

A. I assume that the conferences in the Ministry was initiated by the Minister for Labor Supply, Mr. Sauckel. He, particularly,demandad that the treatment of the Eastern workers should be equal to the workers of Western countries, because the production of the Western workers was at the top.

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Q. As a result of that meeting, Borman sent a circular letter around which was distributed to all gauleiters, kreisleiters, and ortsgruppenleiters. Do you know that?

A. I don't recall, but I guess it's correct.

Q. Well, it must have gone to the gauleiters, kreisleiters, and ortsgruppenleiters of Thuringia, didn't it? Or do you think that the treatment of foreign workers in Thuringia was so good that it was not necessary to send them a copy of the letter?

A. What was the contents of the letter?

Q. I quote from PS 205, and I ought to have given the number of the last one I quoted--PS 315. This is a lengthy document, and I quote the following extract, which appears on Page 2 of the English translation: "Everything is subordinate to the mission of ending the war victoriously. The foreign workers employed within the Reich are to be treated in such a manner that their reliability is retained and expedited, that consequences unfavorable to the Reich be limited to a minimum, and that full labor be retained at a future date for the German war economy." Whatever motives were actuating Mr. Sauckel and the Political Leiters, well, those motives don't seem to be actuating Mr. Borman, do they? The purpose of Mr. Borman's instruction is to see that as little unfavorable consequences occur as possible. What I want to ask you is this, "Why should it be necessary to send a circular letter around to all gauleiters, kreisleiters, and ortsgruppenleiters if foreign labor was not being mistreated?

A. When Mr. Sauckel was appointed plenipotentiary for the Employment of Foreign Labor, only then the huge mass of foreign labor came to Germany, and the problem of feeding, housing, etc...

Q. Will you answer my question. If foreign labor was treated properly, why was it necessary to send instructions like that to gauleiters, kreisleiters, and

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ortsgruppenleiters?

A. Probably they weren't treated in accordance with Mr. Sauckel's orders everywhere, and therefore he asked Mr. Borman to emphasize those orders.

Q. I will read on: "Everyone, even the primitive man, has a fine perception for justice. Consequently, every unjust treatment must have a very bad effect. Injustices, insults, trickery, mistreatment, etc., must be discontinued. Punishment by beating is forbidden." Why should it be necessary to write a circular letter like that, forbidding beating of slave labor?

A. For me, that is just a proof that the Party had to take care of the proper treatment of foreign labor.

Q. And it is perfectly good proof, is it not, that the kreisleiters, gauleiters, and ortsgruppenleiters were not doing so, isn't it?

A. I do not wish to conclude that from that article. Of course, considering the hugeness of foreign labor, it would occur that, in some cases, mistreatment occurred. It was the function of the Party to see to it that those incidents were stopped when they occurred.

Q. It was the function of the Party, was it not, and particularly of the gauleiters, kreisleiters, and ortsgruppenleiters to see that the slave labor in Germany was properly employed? That was their function, wasn't it?

A. Upon order of the hoheitstraegers, the German Labor Front carried out those orders; but, since the hoheitstraegers were responsible for everything, we were responsible for that, too.

Q. I will ask you for the last time, and I will ask you not to shout your answer no matter how excited you may get. If the ortsgruppenleiters carried out their orders in looking after the slave laborers, why should it be necessary for the Party office to send around a directive of that kind?

A. Initially, it was the responsibility of the employer to see to the shelter, feeding, and employment of foreign laborers. If, however, the hoheitstraeger

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learned of inadequacies in the treatment of foreign labor, then they had to see that those mistreatments were stopped.

Q. On 7 June 1933 the gau offices in Coblenz issued a directive to all kreis offices. The subject of the directive was Jew-baiting. It ordered that district directors (that is, the kreisleiters) should set up committees for the task of directing and supervising the communities in the whole district. That was for supervising the communities, you understand, in Jew-baiting. And local communities were to be formed in ortsgruppen and stutzpunkten. I don't suppose that you ever formed committees of that kind in Thuringia, did you?

A. No, certainly not. I was not at that time in the gau office yet, but I was in the city of Gera, and I never learned of such committees.

Q. If the Political Leiters did not participate generally in persecuting the Jews, can you tell me why that circular should have been sent around to the gau office?

A. That is entirely beyond my ability to explain. All measures against the Jews were carried out in Thuringia by State authorities.

Q. Of course, one explanation would be that your evidence anywhere on the Jewish question is untrue. That would be one explanation, wouldn't it?

A. To the best of my knowledge, everything I have said is true.

COLONEL GRIFFITH-JONES:

Q./ I have one or two further questions to ask. I am afraid I do not have a document book here which I need. Perhaps we could adjourn at this time.

(The Commission adjourned at 1655 hours.)

The foregoing is a true and correct transcript of the testimony of BRUNO BIEDERMAN taken on 28 June 1946.

H0996 – 0025

J Covington
Reporter 1-9

D Noll
Reporter 10-23

CERTIFIED TO: Geo. Taylor
Commissioner

H0996-0026

OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT OF TESTIMONY FOR THE DEFENSE OF ORGANIZATIONS, TAKEN BEFORE A COMMISSION APPOINTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL PURSUANT TO PARAGRAPH 4 OF THE ORDER OF THE TRIBUNAL DATED 13 MARCH 1946.

COMMISSIONER:

Mr. George R. Taylor.

POLITICAL LEADERS

(The Commission convened at 1430 hours.)

BRUNO BIEDERMANN, a witness, took the stand and testified as follows:

BY THE COMMISSIONER:

Q. Will the witness state his name.

A. Bruno Biedermann.

Q. Will the witness raise his right hand and repeat this oath after me:

I swear by God, the Almight and Omniscient, that I will speak the pure truth, and will withhold and add nothing.

(The witness repeated the oath).

BY THE COMMISSIONER: You may sit down.

DIRECT EXAMINATION

DR. BERGUS (Counsel for the Political Leaders): I shall hear the witness as stated in the written document on the organization and the duties of the Corps of Political Leaders in Thuringia and the specific charges; persecution of Jews, persecution of the church, treatment of foreign labor and the question of lynching of enemy aviators who had to perform emergency landings. At first, personal questions.

Q. What is your age?

A. 41.

Q. What is your profession?

A. I am in the iron business.

Q. Would you give me a very short description of your personal history?

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A. I was the ninth child of a farmer in Erzgebirge. After having been a pupil in the village school for eight years, I entered a three year commercial school. I was commercial teacher for three years. Up to 1933 I had jobs in my line. I was the manager with the right to sign, of an iron business.

Q. When did you join the party?

A. I joined the Party in 1925 and until 1933 I performed the honary function of a kassenleiter which is a treasurer. I was treasurer of the local group. Automatically the local group then became a Kreis. At the end of 1933, I was active for a short period with the Landesbauernschaft, that is the land farmer group of Thuringia. At the request of the Gauleiter of Thuringia, I became a fill time paid employee of the Party. Until 1936, I was Gaugeschaftsfuhrer, that is Gau business manager. From 1936 on I took over the office of the newly constructed personnel section of the Gau. During my activity as Gaupersonalamtsleiter, which is the manager of the personnel section of the Gau, I temporarily fulfilled the functions of Gauins pektour. The task of the Gau personnel offce during the war was considerably reduced. For this reason I also had to take over the leadership of the Gaustansdnt. Without my knowledge and without any action on my part, I was made honorary leader in the SA. My last rank was that of Oberfuhrer.

Q. I am beginning with the question relating to the organization book. The indictment charges that the organization book is the official organization book of the NSDAP. That probably means that the indictment assumes that the organization book has the value of official field regulations. What would be the difference between an official field order instruction book, and the organization book of the NSDAP?

A. I know both the field regula tions of the Wehrmacht

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and the organization book of the Party. While all trainers and officers within the Army had strictly to observe the regulations of the Army field instructions, the organization book of the Party could not be considered as directives comparable on the same level to the Party Political Leaders.

Q. Do you know of any case in which a Political Leader gave his report in accordance with the organization book of the Party?

A. Neither myself nor my co-workers nor the other Political Leaders of the Gau, as far as I know them, used the organization book in their work.

Q. Did the organization book contain secret orders or instructions?

A. The organization book did not contain secret orders or information of any kind.

Q. If that is so, could you explain to me why the book has been characterized as to be used only for official service groups?

A. Not only the organization book, but many other publications of the Party which were just as widely read as this book contain secrets which did not exist in the party book at all. Many of them characterized for official use only.

Q. How do you explain the large number of copies published?

A. I do not know how large the total number of copies published was, but I do know that the Gau treasurer compiled the figure of copies to be distributed to the Gau and ordered accordingly.

Q. Could you make some rough estimate as to what extent the book was actually read within the Party?

A. Because the book contained a large number of pictures, and also colored pictures, of course, many political leaders looked at it, but I believe that there was not one political leader within the Gau of Thuringia who actually studied and read through the whole book.

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Q. What do you know about the personal attitude of Adolf Hitler with regard to the instructions contained in that book?

A. I do not know the personal attitude of Adolf Hitler. I myself, however, considered the organization book merely theoretical speculation which was in many respects not in accordance with the actual realities and practice and that it contained in many respects wishful thinking for the future state of affairs to be reached.

Q. Details of the indictment make it necessary that we compare some practical details with the regulations contained in the book. The organization book in its 1936 issue deals with the concept of Hoheitstrager in a manner different from that way in which the terms had been used in previous orders. Can you inform us on the concept of Hoheitstrager as it was understoon in practice?

A. For us in the Party there existed always only three Hoheitstrager not including the Fuehrer himself and these three were the Gau, Kreis and Ortsgruppenleiter.

Q. Does that definition of Hoheitstrager make use of the concept of total responsibility used within the Party? In regard to the Hoheitstrager you agree with me that the idea of total responsibility was determine d?

A. Yes.

Q. And if I understand correctly what you just say, then I may say that you believe that Block and Zellenleiters were not included in that total responsibility?

A. No, it was not included.

Q. Did you know that the term "Hoheitstraeger" had created difficulties even within the Supreme Leadership of the Party?

A. Yes. There was a plan to include the Reichsleiters too into the Hoheitstraeger, but they too lacked the characteristics of Hoheitstraeger and therefore were not included.

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Q. If, therefore, after 1936, the Block and Zellenleiters too were called Hoheitstraeger, you would say that it was merely a formal term?

A. Yes.

Q. I believe that I can summarize a number of the questions I had planned to ask. They refer to certain orders issued in regard to Hoheitstraeger, but which were not valid for the Block and Zellenleiters, for instance, the necessity to apply for special permission if a civil servant should be transferred if he was a Hoheitstraeger, or the necessity to obtain a special permit whever a Hoheitstraeger, was requested to make statements as a witness before a court. Can you testify, witness, that Block and Zellenleiters did not have to comply with those orders covering Hoheitstraeger?

A. In my office I had particularly to deal with those matters, and such a permit had to be obtained only in the cases of Hoheitstraeger who were Ortsgruppenleiters. In the case of Block and Zellenleiters that was not necessary. The permission to be witness before a court had to be obtained not only by Hoheitstraeger, but by all Political Leaders from the Gauleiters but that permission was granted in all cases.

Q. I would like to direct your attention to another point of importance. I have before me the fourth edition of the organization book. The book has been used as PS-39. There on page 23 a sharp distinction is made between call to office and appointment to office. The german words are "berufung" and "ernennung". There is stated that the so-called office berufung is pronounced in regard to the office as such and that the appointment of office (ernennung) covers the rank of the office holder. There seems to be distinctions similar to that made within the army in regard to office and rank of office holder. Can you, on the basis of your practical experience, enlighten me in ragrd to those distinctions, and can you correct me perhaps if they did not exist?

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COMMISSIONER: We will now recess for ten minutes.

(The Commission reconvened at 1520)

Q. I will summarize my last question. It was concerned with the distinctions between rank of office and actual position of office. The organization book said that to an actual office you were actually called to, and that for the special rank you were holding it was necessary to receive a special appointment. Was it necessary within the customary language used by the Party to be called to a certain office and to be appointed to a certain rank?

A. Usually the Party member was appointed to office at first for probation time of six months, and afterwards the office was officially turned over to him. If he had performed satisfactorily within the six months he was

officially appointed to the office and received the necessary rank.

Q. So one became Political Leader by appointment and by appoi. ment only ?

A. Yes.

Q. Does the carrying out of the functions of a Political Lead depend on a certain function ?

A. No, he had to be appointed to be a Political Leader. Tha was the first condition.

Q. Therefore the organization book reflects correctly the conditions when it says for instance a member of the Party may b called by a Gauleiter into the office of Director of the Gau, press office or something like that. That does not necessarily mean that he receives a certain rank ?

A. This is a true picture of the realities.

Q. It therefore happenend that somebody actually filled an office for a longer period of time without having been a politi- cal Leader ?

A. Yes.

Q. Wasn't that the true picture particularly for the lower ranks during the years of the war ?

A. It is true for all war office holders unless they were holding office already before the war.

Q. I must come back to my question in regard to the Block and Zellenleiters. Since they were the lower layer of office holders one can assume that they had been office holders prior to the war

A. In general your assumption is q uite correct. There were a few exceptions. For instance a few cases where a person who wa, holding a higher office came from another locality and was appoin ted Block and Zellenleiter, but, the number of those cases was very small perhaps 2 % of the total number. But to give a com- plete picture these cases had to be mentioned.

Q. Since that matter is of high significance I would like to clarify it completely.

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Block and Zellenleiters became political leaders only if and when they were appointed to those offices expressly even if the had filled that function previously to that appointment alread

Q. Do you know of cases in which women or candidates for Par ty membership were entrusted with a temporary taking care of th function of the Block and Zellenleiters for some period of time sometimes for longer periods of time without having been appoin ted to be a Political Leader ?

A. During the last years of the war we were compelled to ma much use of women or candidates for Party membership because other party members were not available any longer because they had been called to army service.

Q. If the indictment uses the term Political Leader in the terminology of the Nazi Party all those who were holding offic without having been expressly appointed to be a Political Lead all those would have to be excluded ?

A. Yes.

Q. One cannot speak of any uncertainty of the Nazi terminol in that regard ?

A. No.

Q. There are still a few questions left in regard to the st office on the Kreis and Gau level. The Gau and the Kreisleite as Political officers were concerned with the political, philos phic guidance of men. Were there offices which were connected with that political guidance of men in a narrow sense and in a broader sense and which office would you consider to have been connected definitely with that political guidance of men ?

A. All tasks of the P arty, of course, were of a political nature. The offices on the Gau and Kreis level were divided into so-called Hauptamt, main office and Amter offices, that i merely office. The Hauptamt, the main offices, were divided among those whom the Hoheitstraeger needed most for the fulfil ment of his political tasks and those office holders who fulfi led mainly professional, ox port assignments.

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Those offices of a mainly political nature in the staff of the Hoheitstraeger were those concerned with propaganda, press and training and all of those with a more administrative task, whic were staff organization, personnel and treasurer. In accordanc with the structure of the individual office, the Gauleiter had an inner circle of people with whom he worked closely together and in the case of our Gau that inner circle was composed of men concerned with propaganda, press and training, the man in charg of staff affairs, the representative of the German Labor Front the Farmers' representative, the National Socialist Welfare Federation representative, and the representative of the women. All these belonged to the most inner circle of Gauleiter.

Q. For the political work, in the most narrow sense of the word, you mentioned only three offices -- propaganda press and training.

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know that the Organization Book characterizes also the staff office, the organizations office, and the personnel office as belonging to that level ?

A. Yes, I know, but those three last-mentioned offices had mainly administrative tasks, while the first three had the poli tical task of addressing the people and sp reading the gospel to them.

Q. With reference to the associated organizations -- they were merely professional organizations ?

A. Associated or anizations would be the merely professional organizations of the educators, the men of leading professions, the physicians, the academic teachers, the students, and the ci. vil servants. Teachers and students were a different category the leaders of whom could be appointed by political leaders.

Q. But in case of those whom we have just mentioned, it is ture to state that they were political leaders only when they had been expressly appointed to be such. Is that ture ?

A. Yes.

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Q. The conferences of the political leaders are considered by the Prosecution as proof of participation in conspiracy. In what kind of periodical conferences did you, as a political leader, participate ?

A. If not prevented, I participated in all conferences of Gau and kreis officeholders in Thuringia.

Q. Were those conferences secret, or was the number or kind of participants limited in any way ?

A. These conferences were never secret, but of course the number of participants was limited to the groups I just characterized. If the office holders were prevented from participating, of course their deputies were permitted to attend for them. In addition to these officeholders, in many cases the lord mayor and the provincial state officials were asked to attend. That was the case whenever the gauleiter addressed the assembly in his capacity as Reichsstatthalter for Thuringia or as a subordinate in Reich matters for the Gau.

Q. What the subject of conversations at these conferences ?

A. The Gau officeholders reported about their fields of activity and the kreisleiter gave brief reports to them. At the end the gauleiter himself gave a political survey

Q. Were any matters touched upon which in any way had a connection with, or supported, crimes against the peace and crime against humanity ?

A. I participated in practically all such conferences in Thuringia within the last twelve years. Never was there any discussion about aggressive war, crimes of any other kind, outrages, or any related matters.

MR. TAYLOR: May I ask Counsel how long he will need this witness ? The Prosecution will need some time for cross examination, and we should finish with him at five o'clock.

DR. BERGES: I still have a considerable number of questions which will take approximately until 4:30.

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MR. TAYLOR: Is the Prosecution able to indicate how long the cross examination will take ?

COLONEL GRIFFIT JONES: I think not very long.

BY DR. BERGES:

Q. The indictment charges that the Corps of Political Leaders participated in a conspiracy and they support their charge with certain points of the Party Program. It especially makes reference to Points one, two and three of the Party program: demands for the union of all Germans, demands for the abrogation of the Treaty of Versailles and St. Germano, and the demands for colonies. Did you or the Political Leaders think of war and other crimes in conjunction with these points ?

A. Referring to Point one : we thought that the union of all German should be accomplished on the basis of the self-determination right of all peoples, as it has been recognised, I believe, in the Treaty of Versailles and St. Germain by peaceful means.

Q. As a further support for its charge of conspiracy, the Prosecution uses quotations from Hitler's "Mein Kampf." Did you know whether political leaders in your district established inevitable connection between these points and war ?

A. Myself, and the political leaders I know then, never thought that we would have another World War.

Q. May I summarize. Did you put belief and trust in Hitler's manifestations and proclamations of peaceful intentions ?

A. Yes, under any circumstances.

Q. Did you know the order of Hitler which was posted in all important Party and other offices, to the effect that important matters of State or of military nature should be known only to those persons immediately and directly concerned with such matters ?

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A I learned of that order for the first time when I was a soldier. I never thought that that order had any bearing on the Party, because the Party officers, particularly those from the ortsgruppenleiter down, had nothing to do with any important or secret matters.

MR. TAYLOR: Don't you think the answer to that could have been "yes" or "No", instead of all that explanation?

DR. BERGES: Yes.

MR. TAYLOR: Unless you want all this in. I will not object to it if you want all that material.

DR. BERGES: That is sufficient.

BY DR. BERGES:

Q Up to what office did people receive the newspaper, "Der Hoheitstraeger"?

A Down to the ortsgruppenleiter, which would mean that block and zellen leiters did not receive it.

Q I would like to discuss with you the relationship of the Political Leaders to the SS. Did any Political Leaders have the right to mobilize the SS?

A The SS originally was an organization of the Party. No hoheitstraeger and no Political Leader had the right to mobilize any organization of the Party. When the chief of the SS was appointed chief of the German police, the SS gained more and more the function of a State police force. That was true because a large number of members of the SS were transferred to the Waffen SS, the Gestapo, and the SD. Practically, the general SS was not in existence anymore -- an observation which we made repeatedly when Party parades were held.

Q The point I am particularly interested in is the statement of the Organizations Book of the Party claiming that the hoheitstraeger -- which would even include, in accordance with the Organizations Book, the block and zellen leiter -- had the right to mobilize the SS. Is that statement correct?

A When the Party organizations -- SS, SA -- were participating in Party demonstrations, the only thing which could be done was that the hoheitstraeger asked the leaders of the unit of the SA or the SS to participate.

Q A few special questions concerning the district of Thuringia? Your superior officer and gauleiter for many years was Mr. Sauckel?

A Yes.

Q How was the relationship of Mr. Sauckel to the SS, especially to the SS leadership?

A If you are referring by "Leadership" to the Reichsfuehrer of the SS, then I can only answer that the relationship was a poor one.

Q Can you give us a brief example of that?

A Yes. In 1932 the State Diet of Thuringia appointed Mr. Sauckel to become Minister of the Interior for the State of Thuringia. In that capacity he was the boss of the State Police to the Reich. Subsequently, Mr. Sauckel, who later became Reichs Governor for Thuringia, had no influence whatsoever on the State Police of Thuringia. As a rule, the Gestapo made him see merely accomplished facts. That led to controversies with the Reichsfuehrer SS in his capacity as chief of the German Police. That was the reason and the beginning of the controversies between those two men.

Q That is enough. I have a more specialized question. The SS in charge of concentration camps?

A If I am not mistaken, the concentration camps were not under the SS, as such, but rather under the Reichsfuehrer SS in his capacity as chief of the police.

Q That may be. What I am interested in is whether the Political Leiters had anything to do with the concentration camps.

A The Political Leiters had nothing to do whatsoever with the creation, with the guarding, or with anything else concerning the concentration camps. That I know from my own experience. In theneighborhood of Weimar, there was the concentration camp of Buchenwald.

Q Do you know of cases in which people were put into concentration camps upon the order of Political Leiters?

A No, I know of no such cases; but I do know of many cases in which kreisleiters and gauleiters exerted pressure for the dismissal of people from concentration camps. I would like to describe very briefly one case. In the fall of 1944, in the course of the campaign Gitter, all former representatives

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and councilmen of Marxist parties -- Socialists and Communists -- were put into the concentration camp Buchenwald. By telephone calls from kreisleiters in Thuringia, I was notified of that campaign. I repeated the matter to the gauleiter and, through a telegram of most emphatic protest to the Reichsfuehrer SS against that matter, the result was that the majority of that group was released again from Buchenwald.

Q Would I fairly summarize the situation, on thebasis of testimony of earlier witnesses, that the SS lived an isolated life of its own, and was a State within a State?

A Yes.

Q I would like to dwell briefly on the persecution of the Jews, which has been used by the Prosecution. I am referring to the district of Thuringia. Do you know of cases in which Political Leiters have participated in the mistreatment of Jews?

A No, I do not knowof any cases like that in the Gau of Thuringia.

Q Do you know that anti-Semitism was an official point of the Party Program?

A Yes.

Q How did you and the other Political Leiters interpret that point of the Party Program?

A Myself, and the other Political Leiters, thought that the Jewish problem would be solved in the following manner -- that the Jews would be given certain reserve territories to dwell in, in a similar manner to the Zionist Movement in Palestine.

Q Your boss was Mr. Sauckel? Did Mr. Sauckel approve any crimes against the Jews?

A No.

COLONEL KAREV: This question is irrelevant.

DR. BERGES: The question refers, not to the person of Sauckel, but rather to his position as gauleiter. What we want to consider here, in spite of the fact that Sauckel was dealt with by the Tribunal already -- we want to consider here what his influence was on the Political Leiters.

MR. TAYLOR: If the witness personally knows of the matter within his gau, it probably would be a proper question; but if he knows nothing about it, then the question is immaterial.

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DR. BERGES: The witness was a co-worker of Sauckel for twelve years.

MR. TAYLOR: Did he answer the question yet? Well, let him answer the question briefly.

A When the action against the Jews was taken November 9-10 1938, I was with Sauckel in Munich. Only the next day I learned of those outrages. On the way back in the motorcar, Sauckel expressed himself to me on these campaigns, and he resented it very much and characterized it as stupidity of the highest degree.

Q Did he tell that to you only personally and privately, or did he reiterate it publicly in meetings with gauleiters and kreisleiters?

A As far as I can remember, he re-emphasized that position in the following conference of gau Political Leiters.

Q I briefly wish to dwell on the charge of the Prosecution concerning the persecution of the Church. Did you know of the so-called "religion stop" order by Hitler?

A Yes.

Q Do you know of any directives ordered or given to lower Party officials which would be in conflict with that order that was destined to establish peace between the Party and the Church?

A The gauleiter in repeated conferences stressed that kreisleiters and gauleiters definitely had to observe all orders by the Fuehrer.

Q Notwithstanding that order, did outrages occur directed against ministers or members of religious orders?

A No, not in Thuringia.

Q Were religious services or similar church demonstrations disturbed?

A No.

Q Were you asked to leave the Church, or did you urge people on whom you had influence to disassociate themselves from the Church?

A I emerged from the German Wandervogel Movement. I left the Church many years ago. I was never asked by the Party to leave the Church, and I myself never asked any Political Leiter, nor did any of my co-workers ask anyone to leave the Church.

MR. TAYLOR: I think that answers the question.

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BY DR. BERGES:

Q I still would like to touch upon the question of foreign labor. Mr. Sauckel filled the position of plenipotentiary for employment. There existed innumerable orders by Sauckel requesting the humane treatment of the workers?

A Yes.

Q How were those orders carried out in Thuringia?

A For the carrying out of the employment problem, the gauleiter had appointed a special official in Thuringia, and he issued orders to him as well as to the State Labor Office to the effect that his orders had to be carried out particularly strictly in his home gau, Thuringia.

Q Before the High Tribunal, the Prosecution has submitted documents which show that Sauckel directives were not observed -- at least, in the district of Essen. That is proven particularly by an affidavit of group physician Dr. Jaeger. Could it have occurred that in Thuringia, in spite of Sauckel's directives, foreign labor could have been treated badly without your knowing it?

A At least the kreis official of the German Labor Front, and the other kreis officials, would have learned of these outrages and would have reported them to us immediately. I know of cases in which foreign labor was mistreated -- and then those people were simply removed. I remember an incident in which the German supervisors took food from the foreign laborers. They were brought before a court and sentenced to hard labor.

Q My last point refers to the lynchings of foreign aviators. There exists an article by Mr. Goebbels in that respect, which was published in the "Volkischer Beobachter." Also a circular letter by Bormann to the Political Leiters down to the kreisleiters. It can't be denied that the pronouncements of Goebbels and Bormann approved, more or less openly, the lynchings. Did the Political Leiters in your district whom you know approve of that attitude or did they resent it?

A As far as I see, the Political Leiters of Thuringia did not interpret those articles as an order to carry out lynchings. During the time of myactivity in Thuringia, I learned of no instances in which Political Leiters shot or mistrated foreign aviators.

Q What was the attitude of the population of Thuringia to that proposal?

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A. I don't know of any cases in which members of the German population lynched foreign aviators. Of course they were very indignant about the attacking methods of the enemy fliers. Particularly when the low-flying enemy fliers started to take as targets running trains and farmers and farmers' wiver working in the fields.

Q. My question was, was the population of Thuringia prepared to commit lynching or to consider these fliers as prisoners of war ?

A. Of course, the moment the enemy fliers bailed out, they were considered prisoners of war and treated accordingly. Even on the estate of a gau offiholder, they were.....

COLONEL KAREV: The witness is giving mere assumptions, and is not basing his testimony on personal knowledge. He repeats, "I assume ..."

DR. BERGES: I am coming to another question which will not permit furth assumptions.

BY DR. BERGES:

Q. Did the Political Leiters do anything to change the attitude of the peop which you described ?

A. No, not as far as I know.

DR. BERGES: No further questions.

CROSS EXAMINATION

BY COLONEL GRIFFITH JONES:

Q. Do you know that we have had witnesses here from the Corps of Political Leiters from, I think, now, Thuringia, Bavaria, Rhineland, Hannover, and Westphalia ?

A. Yes.

Q. And do you know that they have all told us that, in those districts, nobody ever persecuted Jews, nobody had anything to do with the SD, the Gestapo or concentration camps, nobody mistreated any of the millions of slave laborer that were in Germany, nobody lynched airmen, and nobody did naything to persecute the churches. What I want to ask you is this : Can you tell me whereabouts in Germany any of these things did happen ?

A. I am under oath, and what I am telling you is my experience in the Gau of Thuringia, as a Political Leiter there. I cannot speak for any others.

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Q. Then let us see to what extent you oath is of value, I want to deal with one or two points on the matters you have raised. I will deal first of all with your evidence on foreign labor. Do you know that, on 12 March 1943, the Minister for Enlightenment and Propaganda held a conference on the question of the treatment of slave laborers ?

A. I know nothing about it.

Q. Will you can take it, that he did, and that it was laid down there that the treatment of foreign workers was to be better in the future than it had been in the past -in order to increase their production. I just want to read you one or two words from the minutes of that meeting and ask your view on it: "The hitherto prevailing treatment of the Eastern workers has led, not only to a diminished production .. etc." Then it goes on to say :"The treatment of foreign workers, which until now was markedly different from the treatment of subjects of Western and Eastern countries, will be put on a uniform basis as much as possible. Particularly, the living standards of the Eastern workers will be raised." Now, are you telling us that the treatment of foreign workers had been markedly different from the treatment of subjects of Western and Eastern countries everyplace in Germany, except in Thuringia ?

A. I assume that the conference in the Ministry was initiated by the Minister for Labor Supply, Mr. Sauckel. He, particularly, demanded that the treatment of the Eastern workers should be equal to the workers of Western countries because the production of the Western workers was at the top.

Q. As a result of that meeting, Bormann sent a circular letter around which was distributed to all gaultiers, kreisleiters, and ortsgruppenleiters. Do you know that ?

A. I don't recall, but I guess it's correct.

Q. Well, it must have gone to the gauleiters, kreisleiters, and ortsgruppenleiters of Thuringia, didn't it ? Or do you think that the treatment of foreign workers in Thuringia was so good that it was not necessary to send them a copy of the letter ?

A. What was the content of the letter ?

Q. I quote from PS 205 and I ought to have given the number of the last one I quoted PS 315

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This is a lengthy document, and I quote the following extract, which appears on Page 2 of the English translation. "Everything is subordinate to the mission of ending the war victoriously. The foreign workers employed within the Reich are to be treated in such a manner that their reliability is retained and expedited, that consequences unfavorable to the Reich be limited to a minimum, and that full labor be retained at a future date for the German war economy." Whatever motives were actuating Mr. Sauckel and the Political Leit well, those motives dnn't seem to be actuating Mr. Bormann, do they ? The purpose of Mr. Bormann's instruction is to see that as little unfavorable consequences occur as possible. What I want to ask you is this, "Why should it be necessary to send a circular letter around to all gauleiters, kreisleite and ortsgruppenleiters if foreign labor was not being mistreated ?

A. When Mr. Sauckel was appointed plenipotentiary for the Employment of Foriegn Labor, only then the huge mass of foreign labor came to Germany, and th probelm of feeding, housing, etc.....

Q. Will you answer my question. If foreign labor was treated properly why was it necessary to send instructions like that to gauleiters, kreisleiters a ortsgruppenleiters ?

A. Probably they weren't treated in accordance with Mr. Sauckel's orders everywhere, and therefore he asked Mr. Bormann to emphasize those orders.

Q. Il will read on :"Everyone, even the primitive man, has a fine percepti for justice. Consequently, every unjust treatment must have a very bad effec Injustices, insults, trickery, mistreatment, etc., must be discontinued. Pun ishment by beating is forbidden." Why sould it be necessary to wirte a circular letter like that, forbidding beating of slave labor ?

A. For me, that is just a proof that the Party had to take care of the prope treatment of foreign labor.

Q. And it is perfectly good proof, is it not, that the kreisleiters, gauleiters and ortsgruppenlieters were not doing so, isn't it ?

A. I do not wish to conclude that from that article. Of course, considerin the hugeness of foreign labor, it would occur that, in some cases, mistreatments occurred. It was the function of the Party to see to it that those incidents were stopped when they occurred.

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Q. It was the function of the Party, was it not, and particularly of the gauleiters, kreisleiters, and ortsgruppenleiters to see that the slave labor in Germany was properly employed that was their function, wasn't it ?

A. Upon order of the hoheitstraegers, the German Labor Front carried out those orders; but, since the hoheitstraegers were responsible for everything we were responsible for that too.

Q. I will ask you for the last time, and I will ask you not to shout your answer no matter how excited you may get. If the ortsgruppenleiters carried out their orders in looking after the slave laborers, why should it be necessary for the Party office to send around a directive of that kind ?

A. Initially it was the responsibility of the employer to see to the shelter, feeding and employment of foreign laborers. If, however, the hoheitstraeger learned of inadequacies in the treatment of foreign labor, then they had to see that those mistreatments were stopped.

Q. On 7 June 1933 the gau offices in Coblenz issued a directive all kreis offices. The subject of the directive was Jew-baiting. It ordered that district directors (that is, the kreisleiters) should set up committees for the task of directing and supervising the communities in the whole district. That was for supervising the communities, you understand, in Jew-baiting. And local communities were to be formed in ortsgruppen and stutzpunkten. I don't suppose that you ever formed committes of that kind in Thuringia, did you

A. No, certainly not. I was not at that time in the gau office yet, but I was in the city of Gera, and I never learned of such committes.

Q. If the Political Leiters did not participate generally in persecuting the Jews, can you tell me why that circular should have been sent around to the gau office ?

A. That is entirely beyond my ability to explain. All measures against the Jews were carried out in Thuringia by State authorities.

Q. Of course, one explanation would be that your evidence anywhere on the Jewish question is untrue. That would be one explanation, wouldn't it ?

A. To the best of my knowledge, everything I have said is true.

COLONEL GRIFFITH JONES: I have no further questions to ask. I am afraid I do not have a document book here which I need. Perhaps we could adjourn at this time.

(The Commission adjourned at 1655 hours.)

H0996-0046

The foregoing is a true and correct transcript of the testimony of BRUNO BIEDERMAN taken on 27 june 1946.

J. Overington
reporter

D. Noll
reporter

CERTIFIED TO:

George Taylor
commissioner